

# The Senior CHIT★CHAT

Fall 2008



A Publication for Precinct2gether from Commissioner Sylvia R. Garcia

## Group Leaders Take on Important Role for Precinct2gether Seniors

**T**he Precinct2gether senior program is fortunate to have numerous active members who always are interested in new programs, bus trips, special events and other activities sponsored by either Precinct2gether or other groups in the community. Mary Guerrero, Inner City coordinator, Stacey Bush, North Channel coordinator, and Myrian Espitia, South Channel coordinator, are the Precinct Two staff leaders who spend their days planning and finding activities for groups within each of these areas. Each of the coordinators has dedicated senior group leaders who help make the programs successful.

“Group leaders play a vital role in the success of our program by communicating information discussed in our network meetings,” explained Guerrero. “They encourage participation in our events and assist in volunteering in various phases of the programs.”

Currently, Inner City consists of 34 groups, North Channel has 82 active groups and South Channel has 150 groups. There are a wide variety of groups including those from churches, other community centers, Red Hatters and retirees. A Precinct2gether senior group must consist of at least nine members who are 50 years of age or older, with at least 52 percent of its membership residing in Precinct Two.

“After a group is signed up as a senior group with one of our coordinators, the leaders are invited to a networking meeting

where all the group leaders and/or their assistants as well as directors of our Harris County Community Centers come together and discuss what events are coming up, share ideas on travelling and bring them up to date on any procedural or program changes,” said Bush. Currently, the South Channel groups meet once a

month and Inner City and North Channel meet every other month.

The types of events that groups can participate in are quite varied. Once a year, a wish list of events that the groups can choose from is distributed to group leaders. The leaders then bring this list to their groups and they choose which events they’d like to participate in. The lists are then submitted to the coordinators who begin organizing events, purchasing tickets and scheduling buses.

“Group leaders are so very important as they are the ones who communicate

directly with their members and organize the group’s participation in trips and events,” explained Espitia.

“Our volunteer group leaders have a significant job as they inform their members about events and work to fill buses,” added Bush. “They really do a great job. Without them, we wouldn’t have such a strong senior program as they are the advocates for our program. We wouldn’t be able to stay in touch with all the seniors in our area without each group leader. It’s a very important role as they really help keep their fellow seniors active.”



*Group leaders meet on a regular basis to learn Precinct2gether news as well as event programming to share with their members.*



## Things to Know

### Precinct Two celebrates Veteran's Day

The 2nd Annual Commissioner Sylvia R. Garcia Precinct2gether Veterans Picnic is scheduled for Saturday, Oct. 18, at Highlands Park, 604 Highland Woods Drive in Highlands from noon

– 4 p.m. The event will include food and drinks, games and door prizes. All veterans and their families are invited to this fun event. *Right: The annual Veteran's Day picnic is a time to thank veterans for their service. continued on page 3*



# Mark Your Calendar

The following are some major events for seniors taking place at Harris County Precinct Two community centers during September, October and November. The community/activity center which is hosting the event follows the name of each activity:

## SEPTEMBER

**Sept. 2-5** First week of bus bookings

**Sept. 3** Grandparents Day Party, Flukinger

**Sept. 4** Gospel Night, Flukinger

**Sept. 5** Lunch & A Movie, Bay Area

**Sept. 5** Grandparent's Day Lunch, North East

**Sept. 7** Inner City Fiesta Sinfonica, Jones Hall

**Sept. 8** South Channel Council Meeting, EHCAC and Bay Area

**Sept. 8-12** Second week of bus bookings

**Sept. 9** Grandparents Day Party, San Jacinto

**Sept. 9** Gospel Night, San Jacinto

**Sept. 10** Fiestas Patrias con Mariachi Lunch, North East

**Sept. 11** Town Hall Meeting, Grayson

**Sept. 16** Gospel Night, Grayson

**Sept. 17** Grandparent's Day Party, J.D. Walker

**Sept. 18** Inner City Network Meeting, Raul Martinez Annex

**Sept. 22** Baytown Senior Fun Day, Baytown Community Center

**Sept. 23** Volunteer Banquet for Flukinger, Grayson and San Jacinto, Baldree Building

**Sept. 24** Mystery Trip, Nursing Home Program

**Sept. 26** Hometown Opry '50s Night, EHCAC

**Sept. 30** Dinner & A Movie, EHCAC

## OCTOBER

**Oct. 1** North Channel Network Meeting, Flukinger

**Oct. 2** Gospel Night, Flukinger

**Oct. 3** South Channel Lunch & A Movie, Bay Area

**Oct. 3-4** Fall Fund Raiser, North East

**Oct. 6** South Channel Council Meeting, Bay Area & EHCAC

**Oct. 6-9** Precinct2gether Food Harvest Baskets

**Oct. 7** National Night Out, Barrett, Flukinger, Grayson, North East, San Jacinto and Walker

**Oct. 9** Fall Party, San Jacinto

**Oct. 10** Ms. Golden Years, EHCAC

**Oct. 14** Gospel Night, San Jacinto

**Oct. 15** National Hispanic Council on Aging, Humble Civic Center

**Oct. 16** Inner City Network Meeting, Martinez Annex

**Oct. 16** Town Hall Meeting, location to be determined

**Oct. 18** Veterans Picnic, Highlands Park

**Oct. 21** Gospel Night, Grayson

**Oct. 22** Nursing Home Party, Baldree Building

**Oct. 24** Hometown Opry, EHCAC

**Oct. 28** Inner City Halloween Party, EHCAC

**Oct. 29** Halloween Party/Birthday Luncheon, North East

**Oct. 29** Hobo Stew/Costume Contest, Flukinger

**Oct. 30** Mystery Trip, Nursing Home Program

**Oct. 30** Dinner & A Movie, EHCAC

**Oct. 31** Fall Fest, J.D. Walker

**Oct. 31** Fun Day, Bay Area

## NOVEMBER

**Nov. 3** Thanksgiving Luncheon, San Jacinto

**Nov. 3** South Council Meeting, Bay Area & EHCAC

**Nov. 5** Lunch honoring U.S. veterans, North East

**Nov. 6** Gospel Night, Flukinger

**Nov. 6** Inner City Senior Gala, EHCAC

**Nov. 7** Tamalada, North East

**Nov. 7** North Channel Big Band Gala, Baldree Building

**Nov. 7** Lunch & A Movie, Bay Area

**Nov. 11** Gospel Night, San Jacinto

**Nov. 12** Inner City Thanksgiving Luncheon, North East

**Nov. 13** Mystery Trip, Nursing Home Program

**Nov. 14** Hometown Opry Legends Night, EHCAC

**Nov. 18** Gospel Night, Grayson

**Nov. 19** Fall Party, Flukinger

**Nov. 19** Thanksgiving Celebration, J.D. Walker and North East

**Nov. 20** Inner City Network Meeting, Raul Martinez Annex

**Nov. 20** Fall Party, Grayson

**Nov. 20** Lunch & A Movie, Bay Area

### Monthly Birthday Celebrations

**Second Tuesday:** San Jacinto

**Third Wednesday:** Walker

**Third Thursday:** Barrett

**Last Wednesday:** Flukinger, Grayson, North East

## Chit-Chat info:

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### Community Center Dances:

Proceeds benefit Precinct2gether:

<b>Second Thursday:</b>	Grayson
<b>Third Tuesday:</b>	Bay Area (ballroom dancing)
<b>Third Thursday:</b>	East Harris County (EHCAC) (country-and-western dancing)
<b>Fourth Friday:</b>	San Jacinto - no charge to attend (Pick 'N Grin Band)
<b>Sept. 19, Nov. 14</b>	North East (Tejano Dance)

## A Message from Harris County Precinct Two Commissioner

*Sylvia R. Garcia*



We all were saddened in July with the passing of our friend, Commissioner Jim Fonteno. You might not even be reading the Chit-Chat today if it were not for his pioneering work to bring a single bus to Precinct Two seniors.

And, look at us now! We are Precinct2gether – a cohesive group of more than 300 individual senior programs enjoying their unique spirit and activities. Yet, you all share a common spirit that comes together in the Senior Olympics, our annual holiday program, the Black & White Ball and more.

One bus in 1976 has grown to 36 vehicles! An occasional fun outing has grown to transportation programs for those who cannot drive. Our Veterans Program is helping a whole new generation of men and women who have served our country.

Because his name is on a Courthouse Annex, a U.S. Post Office and he and his wife, JoAnn, have the Jim and JoAnn Fonteno Family Park named for them, we will certainly always be reminded of the contributions Jim and his family made to our community.

More than anything else, Jim Fonteno's memory will last in the life and activity each of you brings to our programs as participants and volunteers. It is the continuation of our work in Precinct2gether that is a lasting testament to a great public servant and a decent and honest man.

In this edition of the Chit-Chat, we offer one final farewell to Commissioner Fonteno. I hope the pictures inside inspire and remind you – as they did me – of the spirit of service that forms the base of Precinct2gether.

## Things to Know

*continued from the cover*

### Conference to Focus on Senior Issues

The Houston Chapter of the National Hispanic Council on Aging is hosting its 15th annual "Bajo El Mismo Techo/Under the Same Roof" conference on Wednesday, Oct. 15, 2008, from 8 a.m. – 3 p.m. at the Humble Civic Center.

More than 50 service and benefit providers that focus on the needs of seniors are expected to participate. This year's program will include mariachi music, dance performers, exercise demonstrations, food, dancing and door prizes. There is no admission fee for this program. For more information, contact Mary Guerrero at 713-514-0185.

### Fall Town Hall Meetings Set

Commissioner Sylvia Garcia will hold two town hall meetings this fall for local residents. This is a perfect opportunity to not only learn more about what's new in Precinct Two but also to share your thoughts with the Commissioner.

The Channelview/North Shore Town Hall will be Thursday, Sept. 11, from 6:30 p.m. – 8 p.m. at the Grayson Community Center and the Inner City Town Hall will be Oct. 16 from 6:30 p.m. – 8 p.m. with the location to be determined.

### Community Centers Prepare for National Night Out

National Night Out (NNO) was created as a way to strengthen communities. Since that time, the event has grown and now takes place in all 50 U.S. states.

The 25th annual National Night Out will be celebrated on Tuesday, Oct. 7. Several Harris County Precinct Two Community Centers are planning gatherings.

The Barrett Station/Riley Chambers Community Center begins its NNO event at 6:30 p.m. at the City of Refuge Education Care parking lot, 12028 Crosby-Lynchburg Rd, where all churches in this community meet. The program will feature a DJ, singing, a pep rally, sermon and refreshments.

South Texas Boys will provide entertainment for Flukinger's NNO that runs from 6 p.m. – 8 p.m. Attendees can enjoy snacks while visiting with local businesses and the Channelview Fire Department.

The Grayson Center's event will include games, hot dogs, face painting and a visit from the sheriff's office and fire department. Music, refreshments, general information booths and the Harris County Canine Unit will be part of the North East Center NNO. Both these programs last from 6 p.m. – 8 p.m.

The San Jacinto Center is hosting its Fifth Annual NNO Ice Cream Social from 6 p.m. – 8 p.m. Several community organizations are working together to host this event. The Walker Center also is hosting a NNO program from 6 p.m. – 8 p.m. that will include music and refreshments.

For more information, contact the hosting community center.

### Centers to Administer Flu Shots

Each year, more than 200,000 people are hospitalized in the United States from flu complications and approximately 36,000 people will die because of influenza. Seniors are considered a high-risk group for developing complications if they contract influenza.

The best way to reduce the chance of getting the flu is a flu shot. Several Precinct Two community centers will have flu shots available for seniors. Check with your local center to learn when flu shots will be available, if reservations are needed and additional details.

### New Phone Numbers for Two Precinct2gether Programs

The Precinct2gether Voucher Transportation and Nursing Home programs recently received direct line phone numbers. The new Voucher Transportation number is 281-326-6013 and the Nursing Home number is 281-479-7199.



# REMEMBERING FORMER PRECINCT TWO COMMISSIONER

## *Jim Fonteno*



During his 28-year tenure, Commissioner Jim Fonteno led innovative projects for Harris County's Precinct Two, which included launching the Precinct's seniors program. Commissioner Fonteno was a skilled negotiator who always put the interest of his constituents first. He was a decent, honest man, a great public servant and a legacy to all who knew him.





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# 20-year Active Member of Flukinger Center Celebrates Centennial



*H.C. Smith is joined by his children to celebrate his 100th birthday.*

One of the more familiar faces at the Ramsey/Flukinger Community Center, H.C. "Smitty" Smith, recently reached an amazing milestone when he turned 100 years old on June 17. More than 100 of the Center's seniors and staff helped Smith celebrate his birthday with a party on June 18.

Smith has been an active member of the Ramsey/Flukinger Center for more than 20 years and today he still attends weekly meetings, most holiday parties and covered dish luncheons. An avid sports fan of the Astros and the Dallas Cowboys, Smith spent his professional career working as a welder at companies including AO Smith, Armco, and Brown and Root. His children, Addie Smith, Gayle Evans and Charles Smith, joined him at the Ramsey/Flukinger celebration.

## Are You Ready for the DTV Conversion?



On July 2, 1928, the first regularly scheduled U.S. television service began in Wheaton, Md. By 1946, .5 percent of U.S. households had televisions with that number jumping to 55.7 percent in 1954 and 90 percent of households owning at least one television by 1962. Today, 99 percent of U.S. homes have televisions and Americans spend more than six hours each day watching their favorite shows.

The advent of color TV, the size of sets, the amount of shows and the hours that television is broadcast have changed dramatically over the last 80 years. Another significant change will affect all U.S. television owners on Feb. 17, 2009, when federal law requires that all full-power television broadcast stations stop broadcasting in analog format and switch to only digital format.

Congress mandated this change for several reasons including all-digital broadcasting will allow more frequencies for public safety communications such as the police, fire departments and emergency rescues. Digital broadcasts offer improved picture and sound quality as well as more programming choices. The additional freed-up frequencies may be used in the future for advanced commercial wireless services that would be available to consumers.

### How DTV Will Impact Each Television

The transition to DTV will have a tremendous impact on those who watch free, over-the-air television (commonly through a rooftop antenna). Television owners who currently are watching over-the-air programs on an analog TV need to take action before Feb. 17, 2009.

If a television receives signals via an antenna and is not connected to a cable or satellite service, the owner will need to obtain a digital-to-analog set-top converter to watch over-the-air TV. Without a digital-to-analog set-top converter, TVs with only antennas will no longer receive any signals.

If a TV is connected to a cable or satellite system, it will not need a converter box to work after Feb. 17, 2009. The Federal Communications Commission digital tuner rule specifies that after March 1, 2007, all new TVs include a digital tuner. If a television was purchased after that date and currently shows are being accessed via an antenna, the TV should have a digital tuner that can be used after the DTV conversion. It is important to note that some TVs sold in the U.S. after March 1, 2007, may have been from a company's existing inventory so owners should check the television's operating manual or contact the manufacturer to determine if the television has a digital tuner.

### Purchasing a Converter Box

Converter boxes should be available from both local and national retailers. These boxes have an average cost of \$40 to \$70 per unit. From now until March 31, 2009, all U.S. households are eligible to request two coupons (valued at \$40 apiece) that can be used to purchase up to two digital-to-analog converter boxes.

The National Telecommunications and Information Administration is administering the digital-to-analog converter box coupon program. To receive a coupon call 888-388-2009 or go online to [www.DTV2009.gov](http://www.DTV2009.gov). Operators are available who speak many different languages. Keep in mind that coupons expire 90 days after they are issued.

For more information on the DTV conversion, visit the Federal Communication Commission's Digital TV Transition Web site at [www.dtv.gov](http://www.dtv.gov).



## Seniors Enjoy the Art of Wind Chimes

Whether they're used as a decorative element or for the sounds the slightest breeze brings to them, wind chimes are a popular item in many homes. They're also a favorite among both new and experienced crafters. Seniors at the Bay Area Community Center recently had the chance to try their hand at creating wind chimes.

"We are always on the lookout for new arts and crafts projects for our seniors and my assistant director, Toni Varnell, recently came across a book describing the art of wind chimes," explained Elizabeth Williams, director of the Bay Area Community Center. "Toni created a set of wind chimes herself and we showed her finished work, as well as described the potential class, to some of our seniors during our monthly 'Lunch & a Movie' program. From that one announcement, we had a full class who made some really nice wind chimes."

The class was such a hit when it premiered in July that a second class was added for August and a Halloween-themed wind chimes class is on the agenda for this fall. Creating wind chimes is not as simple as it may seem, as there is a lot of knot tying but the final product is worth the effort.

Varnell also has shared this new craft talent with several nursing home directors. "Freda Morris, director for Precinct2gether's Nursing Home Program, asked if Toni could teach a craft class to the directors of several of our nursing homes and Toni was happy to show them how to create wind chimes," explained Williams. "We're always willing to share our craft ideas with others in Precinct2gether so all of our seniors have the chance to enjoy working with art projects. We're also really open to new ideas that we come across or that our seniors bring to our attention so we can expand our arts-and-crafts program."



## Understanding the Role of Flood Insurance

Surprising to many, there is one natural disaster that has occurred in all 50 U.S. States and causes more than \$2 billion dollars of property damage annually. "Ninety percent of disasters are floods," explained Sarah L. Moore, assistant director of safety operations and emergency management for Harris County Precinct Two. "A flood can be due to a rain storm that causes creeks to flood neighboring houses, a dam breaking, inland flooding from a hurricane or something as simple as a mattress being dumped in a gutter and backing up the storm water system. Typically, homeowner's insurance does not cover any outside sources of water entering a house."

Flood insurance must be purchased separately from homeowner's or renter's insurance. Except when purchasing a home, a flood insurance policy takes 30 days to be active, so you cannot call when a storm is forming and have coverage before it hits. If a home is in a floodplain, the mortgage company will require flood insurance. Keep in mind that just because a home is not in a floodplain does not mean there is no risk.

Flood insurance is available to homeowners, business owners and renters, and protects against the financial burden floods can cause. In most cases, flood insurance is reasonably priced and everyone is eligible to buy it. People mistakenly think those

without flood insurance will have their expenses covered by the federal government. According to Moore, if a person chooses not to have flood insurance, he or she must wait for a presidential disaster declaration to be eligible for federal aid in the form of a loan that must be paid back at an average cost of \$240 a month. In addition, federal disaster assistance is awarded in less than 50 percent of flood incidents.

The official Web site of the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), <http://www.floodsmart.gov>, is a valuable resource that allows users to type in an address and find out their flood risk, local agents providing coverage in their area and provides more information on flood insurance and the damage floods cause.

Floods can be a tremendous hazard not only to homes and businesses but also to personal safety. Always stay out of floodwaters as they can contain fire ants, snakes, sewage and other hazards. "Remember it only takes six inches of water to sweep a person off his feet and 12 inches of water to move a vehicle," said Moore. "It's best to remember the phrase, 'Turn around don't drown,' when approaching flooded roadways." If you have questions about flood insurance, visit the NFIP Web site or call the Precinct Two Safety and Emergency Management office at 713-455-0062.



Precinct2gether  
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Houston, TX 77015

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## Precinct2gether welcomes all new participants!

Precinct2gether serves Harris County Precinct Two seniors in Barrett Station, Baytown, Channelview, Clear Lake, Crosby, Deer Park, El Lago, Galena Park, Highlands, Houston, Jacinto City, La Porte, McNair, Morgan's Point, Nassau Bay, North Shore, Pasadena, Seabrook, Sheldon, Shore Acres, South Houston, Taylor Lake Village and Webster.

*Precinct2gether Inc. is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization.*

# ★ DIRECTORY ★

## Department of Community Centers & Senior Programming

Department of Community  
Centers & Senior  
Programming  
713-455-4869

Inner City Program  
713-514-0185

North Channel Program  
281-452-7598

Nursing Home Program  
281-479-7199

South Channel Program  
281-479-4232

Barrett Station &  
Riley Chambers  
Community Centers  
281-328-4713

Bay Area  
Community Center  
281-326-2955

East Harris County  
Activity Center  
281-479-4232

Grayson Community Center  
713-455-3660

North East  
Community Center  
281-442-7950

Ramsey & Flukinger  
Community Center  
281-457-1810

San Jacinto & Highlands  
Community Centers  
281-426-7561

Walker Community Center  
281-426-3551

**Harris County Precinct Two  
Transportation Department**  
281-452-6071

**Voucher Transportation**  
281-326-6013

**Veterans Services**  
281-426-2832 or  
281-843-2019